29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 AP1 Burma
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term 'beautiful' is here significant.[50] A Burmese *pwè* or open-air variety performamce will begin at dusk and sustain a frolic of wit and dance until the morning, and the same vivacity informs the frequent religious pageants and dramas. If the underlying Buddhism is indeed pessimism, it is at least 'touched with hope and mysticism.'[51]

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Fielding Hall has suggested that there is an element of Nature-mysticism in the Burman's outlook. Both his Animism and his Buddhism encourage him to believe that he is intimately related to all Nature: Buddhism because it will allow no separate souls but sees all Life as one; Animism because "legends and tales, the spirits of hills and rivers, of the trees and flowers" express the fact that "Life is a great whole."[52]

A Nature poem by a fifteenth century Burmese Buddhist may be regarded as some corroboration of this estimate. The writer conceives all Nature doing homage to the Buddha:

"A clamour of colour fills the vernal woods.
Tender fruits peep from the budded quicks.
Mellow clusters, luscious as ambrosia, sway in the air....
The acid lime, the delicious custard-apple, the juicy mango, the restless *petthet* and the riotous *grewia*
Rush to render their homage to the thrice-adored Sage."[53]

In his later work,[54] Fielding Hall seems to equate Burmese Buddhism with a vague and woolly pantheism in which all tigers are lambs and all roads lead to truth, but at least he sees the poetry of Burmese life and religion. Later reflection led him to correct the view contained in his *Soul of a People* that the Burmese feeling for Nature was separate from their Buddhism.[55] Instead, he now discerned a fusion giving colour and buoyancy to their faith. "Here was the world the Greeks had lived in. All the gods yet lived to those who still had ears to hear their voices in the forest sounds, eyes to see them flitting through the darkened woods or bathing in the mountain pools.... Were the trees alive? Surely they were. They had their life, they were not dead unlovely things, but living." Comparison with Greek ideas has occurred to others. Greek gods and Burmese *Nats* are similarly very human and capricious, it is suggested.

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The Greek comparison recurs to mind when we consider a further aspect of Burmese Buddhism — its social, with which may be joined

[50] "The Women of Burma." *Buddhism*, Vol. I, No. 1, (Rangoon).
[51] *M.B.B.*, p. 10.
[52] H. Fielding Hall, *The Inward Light*, chap. III, p. 24.
[53] "The 'Tawla' of Shin Uttamagyaw," ed. by U. Po Byu, free trans. by Maung Ba Han. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. VII, pt. II, (1917).
[54] *The Inward Light*.
[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7, 24; cf. *The Soul of a People*, chap. XX, pp. 269 ff.